OFFICER RON VOELLER

The Lifesaving Award is given to department personnel who, by their immediate actions, have saved a human life under unusual and/or extraordinary circumstances

On November 7, 2007, Officer Ron Voeller responded to the overpass of Sherman over I-90 in Spokane, regarding a female on the bridge. He observed her staring over the rail at the freeway below, not paying attention to anything around her. She then climbed over the rail, dangling her left leg over the edge. Officer Voeller called out to her, but she did not acknowledge his presence; she was totally focused on the traffic below. She started to pull her right leg over the rail, still focused on the traffic below. Officer Voeller grabbed onto her upper body and pulled her back over the rail towards him. She landed on the pavement on her right side . Officer Voeller had her in protective custody even before back-up arrived. Her only injuries were a sore arm from being pulled off of the railing.

Afterwards, it was learned that the female has attempted suicide several times in Spokane as well as on the west side of the state. She had been at Deaconess earlier in the day for suicidal issues, but was released by mental health professionals. She then called mental health professionals at 7:39 p.m., stating she was going to jump off of a bridge. While all of the officers who have dealt with this woman in the past deserve praise, Officer Voeller went above and beyond, by placing himself in danger while pulling her off of the railing without backup. This female weighs about 165 pounds, and if she had jumped at the last second, there is a good possibility that Officer Voeller might have been pulled over the railing with her. Officer Voeller stated that at the time, he didn't realize how dangerous the rescue really was.

It is clear that Officer Voeller's actions saved the life of this victim. He was issued the Lifesaving Bar, to be worn on his uniform. He was also awarded the Lifesaving Medal at our annual Employee Awards Ceremony, in February 2008.